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WRITING FOR CHILDREN: HISTORY TEXTBOOKS AND TEACHING TEXTS

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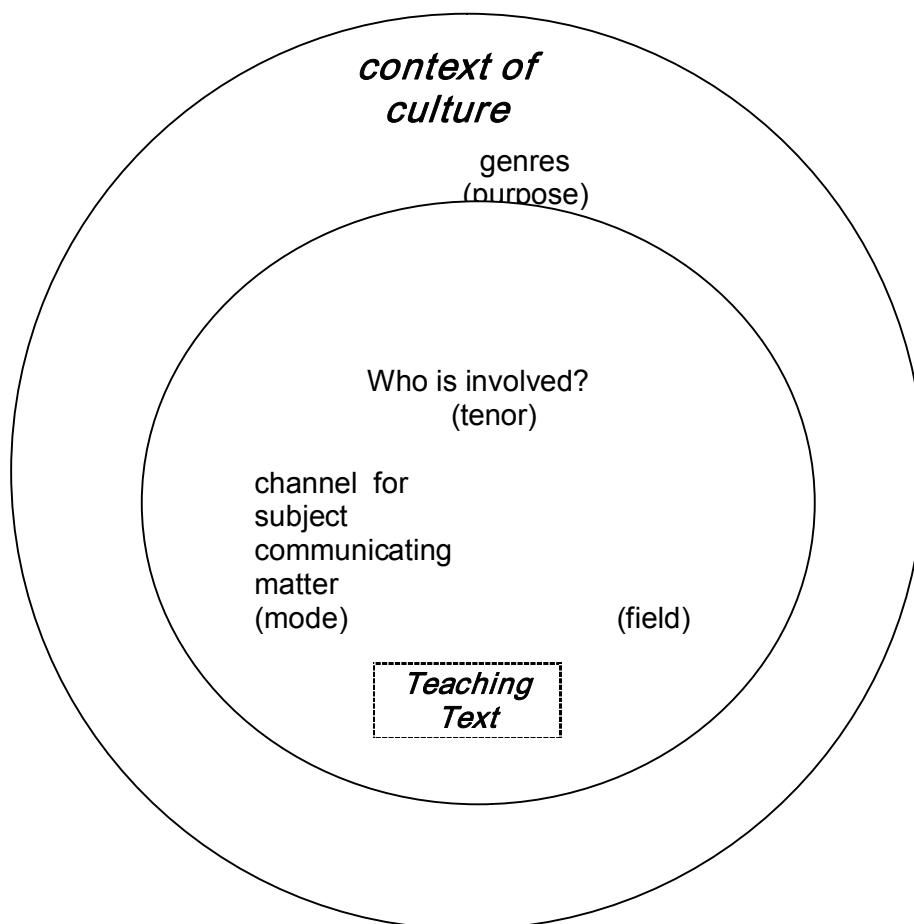
Abstract *Writing for children is a relatively obscure corner in the secret garden of the curriculum. Yet it is in many ways of the greatest significance: learning predominantly occurs either through the spoken word or through other media, usually of a printed kind. In the 21st century media used in writing for, or more accurately, communicating with children, can take many forms, resulting in a wide range of teaching-texts. Teaching-texts are texts that teachers use for teaching and learning. They usually take the form of textbooks that have continued to permeate all aspects of teaching. Textbooks are still universally used, usually as an element in a lesson that dominated by teacher discourse. This paper analyses history textbooks as a genre in history teaching from their introduction at the start of the 20th century, using for analytical purposes the Australian genre school's systemic functional model of language (Wyatt-Smith, 1997). Four elements combine to give each textbook its distinct form or micro-genre: the overall **cultural** factors that influence the other three: the **field** or content; the **tenor**, the author's perception of the audience that produces the text's voice or register; and the **mode**, the physical form which the textbook takes. Genre theory is applied to three different consecutive and overlapping styles of history textbook from the early to the late 20th century. The paper looks at recent writing for children that breaks away from the established history textbook genre. We now attempt to engage children directly with the evidence from the past in creating their own historical understanding. In this we provide teacher support that builds on pupils' interests, enthusiasm, existing knowledge, understanding and expertise.*

1 Introduction

There is a relative silence about what is involved in writing for children in relation to pupils interacting with, understanding and using teaching-texts (McKeown and Beck, 1994). This paper attempts to look at what producing teaching-texts involves from the perspective of practitioner researchers who have spent over thirty years in continually writing for children using a range of printed and electronic media, i.e. worksheets, pamphlets, simulations, resource packs, textbooks, computer programs and websites. While the paper will draw upon this experience, it will relate to current creation of teaching-texts for an audience of 9-11 year old children of mixed ability and gender in English state schools. This in turn links to an interest in genre theory and the systemic functional model of language (Halliday and Martin, 1993; Wyatt-Smith, 1996) and the role of texts that the National Literacy Strategy in England stimulated from 1997/98. The functional model relates to teaching-texts as a text type that relates to two determining elements: the context of culture and the context of situation (see Fig. 1).

We define teaching-texts as learning materials for children that can take many shapes and forms. Teaching-texts can draw upon and combine elements from the whole range of available media: the aural, iconic, orthographic and electronic and take a multiplicity of genres, from the conventional printed or written page to film, computer programs, dramatic presentations, audio tapes, collages, posters and monuments (Kress and Leeuwen, 1996).

Figure 1. The Systemic Functional Model of Language and Teaching-Texts



The teacher and teaching-texts are perhaps the two key vehicles in schools for the transmission of knowledge to pupils. Creating teaching-texts for children can be personal by the individual teacher working autonomously, by teachers as authors working collectively or by teachers being one 'voice' in the authoring process, usually working via the medium of an external agency such as a government agency, a Local Education Authority, a publisher or an educational charity. The knowledge that permeates teaching-texts for children is constructed and mediated through political, social and cultural determinants, the outer ring of figure 1. In turn, these structuralist factors shape and influence the form and function of the teaching-text in terms of the inner ring that results in its register.

Still the most common form of teaching-text is the textbook: a genre that dominated in the western world's schools from c. 1900 onwards. Here since c. 1900 the textbook has been a pervasive presence, although the way in which it is used is problematic. Research evidence suggests that when books were the universal teaching aid, the extent to which they were read was minimal (Levine, 1981, p.91). Advice to teachers is to treat them with caution, scepticism and reserve, regarding them as one of a number of sources to be drawn upon in constructing understanding (Haydn, Arthur & Hunt, 1997). When subject to detailed analysis textbooks fall between the Charybdis of distortion through simplification and the Scylla of confusion through detail and complexity (Claire, 1996, pp. 114-15). Worse, the orientation of the author can lead to claims of ethnocentrism and bias, as for example in teaching-texts on Stalin's Russia (Maw, 1994).

2 Textbooks

In commercial educational publishing the dominant form teaching-texts take is still the textbook: in areas where publishers have moved towards alternative media such as CD-Roms and computer programs there is the acrid smell of digital carbonisation (Longman Education's ICT division, for example). The central theme of this conference, the divide between teachers, pupils and publishers of educational printed and electronic media might be mythical in terms of publishers' awareness. There is in fact a continuous dialogue between every publisher and classroom teachers to ensure that a *text's* register, its voice, maps as closely as possible on to the expectations of the intended audience – primarily teachers, with their pupils in mind. This dialogue takes the form both of direct contact between commissioning editors and teachers and indirect contact filtered via the medium of the sales force, the reports of reviewers of publishing proposals and other sources of information, such as attendance at conferences or reply slips from teachers from mailings and catalogues. There is also dialogue between every writer and teachers and pupils – beware the writer whose antennae are not finely tuned to the messages that the intended audience sends out. If children's interests and concerns are not considered, the market makes its judgment – the books remain unsold, the writer's income disappears and the publisher faces insolvency.

In a real sense a classic market economy operates in England for educational media in general and textbooks in particular, with only the fittest surviving in a 21st century capitalist economy. The definition of the nature of the market economy in educational publishing is for economists; it is the working of the market economy that concerns us. A major problem for publishers is when external factors distort that market and mean that the publisher's sense of audience is destroyed. The biggest such distortion in England was the introduction of the National Curriculum from 1988 to 1992; at a stroke it destroyed *the backlist* upon which publishers' survival depended. The

external intervention was compounded from 1991 to 1995 when revisions to the National Curriculum destroyed the *front-list*, the new series of textbooks that publishers were developing to pay off their debts. Government policy at a stroke destroyed the publishers' intended purchasing audience. The most significant victim of the destruction of the front-list was Macmillan Education whose c. £1,000,000 investment in science educational publishing became as relatively worthless as some dot.com shares are today. The pulped scheme no doubt fetched a premium price on the cat litter market.

This is where Internet publishing comes into its own. Unlike traditional history textbook publishing, the market for Internet resources is growing rapidly. Web-based resources vary amazingly in quality; however, educational sites are improving steadily. Useful Internet sites allow teachers and pupils to read primary sources in the form of both written and visual texts, make virtual visits to historical sites and similarly examine artifacts virtually. Such sites offer a far wider range of resources (and links to others) than traditional published textbooks can, and are liberating in the variety of topics covered – unlike textbooks, they do not focus overmuch on 'core' curriculum topics (Belben and Hassell, 2003). We ourselves maintain two such websites: Exeter University's History Resource (www.historyresource.ex.ac.uk) and the Nuffield Primary History Project's website (www.primaryhistory.org). Both combine downloadable learning resources with teaching ideas and accounts. Perhaps their greatest advantage is that they can publish, quickly, resources and curriculum development done in real classrooms by both academics and teachers.

3 Textbooks and genre

Textbooks are a genre, but what do we mean by genre? Definitions of genre are varied, complex and debated. When it comes to discussing the relationship between genre and the 'voice' of a teaching-text, its register, definitions are overlapping and even contradictory (Littlefair, 1991). And, how do ideas about genre relate to creating *teaching-texts* for children in general and writing commercially in particular? The definition of genre since the 1980s draws heavily upon the Australian genre school. The genre school views genre within its educational setting as being *functionalist*: the identity of a mode of communications is related to its *purpose* and *use*. In relation to pupil literacy, the Australians focused upon genre to empower working class and immigrant children: to equip them with an extensive working repertoire of genres that would give them an entrée to a range of professions and occupations. Bahtia (1997) is explicit about the importance of genres in professional settings:

Genres are dynamic constructs, even though they are essentially seen as embedded in conventions associated with typical instances of language use in social, academic or professional settings. An understanding or a prior knowledge of conventions is considered essential for its identification, construction, interpretation, use and ultimate exploitation by members of specific professional communities to achieve socially recognized goals with some degree of pragmatic success. (p. 367)

We can extend Bahtia's definition to the educational world: with the difference that the role of genres relates to the differing roles and status of the teacher and the taught. For teachers the textbook, as a genre, has a clear purpose in relation to a set of educational goals, mediated and enforced in England through teacher accountability via external inspections (OFSTED) and accreditation – the examination process (SATS, GCSE, A/AS level). Perhaps the most commonly used

genre in the accountability and accreditation dominated classroom is the textbook, although increasingly teachers use a range of other genres – video, worksheets, topic books, pamphlets and reference books. What kind of teaching-text genre is a textbook? Yes, we may recognise one when we see it, but what are the genre's identifying features? What makes a textbook for children recognizable as being different from a cookbook or novel or, within the context of a school, a topic book or biography?

By definition, textbooks share the features of a common macro-genre that give them their identity. The textbook macro-genre in turn allows for an infinite variety of micro-genres that makes each textbook series unique. Micro-genres depend upon the relationship that each textbook reflects between the three defining features of all genres, **field**, **tenor** and **mode**, and a fourth overarching factor: the **cultural milieu** in which they exist. Fig. 1. indicates the relationship between a genre's elements.

Each genre reflects the context for which it is intended:

field	<i>expressed through</i>	<i>Ideational function</i>
what is happening in the text, the content		The content, in terms of ideas, concepts, information, cultural markers and indicators
tenor	<i>expressed through</i>	<i>the register</i>
The voice of the text in terms of the <i>authorial intent</i> in relation to the intended <i>audience</i>		the voice of the text The text's 'language' as an expression of its <u>purpose</u>
mode	<i>expressed through</i>	<i>textual form</i>
the medium through which the meaning of the text is conveyed		the shape, structure, patterns and conventions of the text

The **cultural milieu** permeates and influences all aspects of the creation of a textbook. It is the structuralist factor that determines the **field**, it influences all aspects of the **tenor** (the authorial voice and the teaching-text's register), and it is a major determinant of the **mode**. The interplay between these four elements provides a textbook's parameters and gives it its unique identity. An analysis of textbooks' micro-genres enables a fine-grained analysis of how each textbook relates to the

highly complex and sophisticated pedagogical content knowledge of teachers that Shulman (1987) initially identified. In particular, how do textbooks transmute academic subject knowledge into the knowledge bases that teachers draw upon (Turner-Bisset, 2001)?

Thus when we analyse the micro-genres of Richards', Unstead's and Nichol's textbooks below, each has an identical macro-genre; their micro-genres are significantly different.

4 History textbooks, 1902-1995

As a genre, the history textbook in England is a relatively recent development. In the late 19th century, history was extensively taught in elementary schools through the medium of readers whose primary purpose was teaching children to read (Yeandle, 2003). These readers told moral and cautionary tales, centred on the lives of the great and good, from King Alfred to Queen Elizabeth I, that would teach through example. However, there was no formal history teaching as such: in 1890 only 414 elementary school departments offered specific history lessons; this figure leapt to 23,000 in 1903. The reason? History became a statutory subject in 1902. The 1902 Act was implemented through the medium of the 1904 *Elementary School Code*

Figure 2: Writing for children: The textbook genre

Genre Elements	Definition	Detail
The field	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The cultural context• Factors influencing and shaping content	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Society's views on the nature and role of school education – the cultural perspective• The political parameters and regulations that frame the context for textbook use• Influence of agency, factors that influence and shape the form that education takes• The academic world's influence upon the forms of knowledge represented in textbooks• The role of school history in the education of pupils

<p>The tenor</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The cultural context • The authorial voice • A sense of audience The authors' understanding of the intended audience • The purpose of the text 	<p>The education, background, values, beliefs and assumptions of the authorial team. The authorial voice is the outcome of the interplay of:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The publisher / author 2. The publisher: the accountant, the lawyer, the owner 3. The publisher: editor + management group 4. The publisher: creative team (art, design) 5. The series editor 6. The readers 7. The representatives 8. The author[s] <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Head teacher 2. Head of History and staff 3. Children 4. Parents 5. Governors and others in the community 6. Other <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Social/Cultural/Political 2. Educational: pupils – learning outcomes 3. Educational: teachers – the textbook's role 4. Institutional: role in overall pattern of a department and its curriculum 5. Community: parents and governors 6. Commercial
<p>The mode</p>	<p>The medium for communication</p>	<p><u>Conventions</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Typeface: size 2. Number of words per page 3. Illustrations: number, form, size 4. Layout 5. Conventions 6. Style

(Barnard, 1961) and the 1905 *Handbook of Suggestions for the Consideration of Teachers and others engaged in the Work of Public Elementary Schools*. The Elementary School Code was clear about the place of history in the curriculum: *'Not less than 4.5 hours per week must be allotted to English, Geography and History'* (Maclure, 1965).

As a consequence the history textbook emerged almost overnight in a recognizable form, a form that has altered little through time. The title of Roscoe Morgan's 1904 textbook *The Oxford and Cambridge History of England from B.C. 55 to A.D. 1904* (1904) sets the tone. The history textbook genre developed within a milieu of pedagogic freedom: outside the overall requirement to teach history, how it was to be taught was the province of each school and its teachers. *'There is no country in which the teacher in the State schools has more freedom than he has in England'* (Barnard, 1961, p.217), a freedom that lasted until 1988. What were the factors that influenced textbook development between 1902 and 1988? A distinctive history textbook genre rapidly emerged (Dymond, 1929).

The field

The field of the textbook genre presented history as a body of knowledge for pupils to engage with and assimilate. Social expectations and assumptions, politically mediated, determined each textbook's content, content grounded in the academic discourse of university historians. School history had a clear purpose: knowledge of the past was linked to pupils' future role as citizens, i.e. it aimed to give *'enough knowledge, pride, interest and perhaps dissatisfaction in regard to the past to make them good citizens in the future'* (Dymond, 1929, p.28).

Three major textbooks, written by Denis Richards, R.J. Unstead and Jon Nichol, illustrate the influence of the cultural dimension of the history textbook's field. Denis Richards' universally used *An Illustrated History of Modern Europe*, first published in 1938 and updated many times, declared:

The French Revolution is probably the most important event in Modern European History. **The ideas of 'liberty' and 'equality'** which inspired the Revolution affected not only France and the generation of 1789 but the whole of Europe and the whole of the 19th century. As time went on, state after state **rose to overthrow the greatest obstacles to 'liberty'** – foreign rule or autocratic kingship. A climax was reached in the World War of 1914-1918, when the Allies, fighting 'to safeguard the rights of small nations' (among other things) helped to free the despotically ruled districts of Central Europe and set them up as new, **independent, democratic states** – such as Poland and Czecho-Slovakia (Richards, 1938, p. ix) [our emphases in **bold**].

Whig history with a vengeance! The struggle against the Axis of Evil was won – but history had a twist in its tail, as the 1950 edition of Richards's book in its 15th printing stated:

*Liberal, parliamentary democracy, then – the democracy for which Europe strove throughout the 19th Century – is still a **leading concept** in the world. But it has now to face its greatest challenge. For the **appeal of Communism**, with its policy of despoiling the upper and middle classes in the interests of the masses (as determined by the Communist Party leaders), is very great, despite the restrictions on personal freedom and the right of opposition which it entails; and among the poverty-stricken and land-hungry peasantry of Asia it may well prove irresistible.*

*The stage appears set, then, for a drama on old themes with a new twist. It is still **the struggle for freedom** which is being played out, just as it was in the 19th century. But this time the protagonists are not autocratic kingship and liberal democracy, but **liberal democracy and totalitarian Communism** (Richards, 1950, p.345) [our emphases in **bold**].*

Here in a real sense the cultural dimension structurally determined the selection and presentation of content. Denis Richards' content supported the overall purpose of his book – an account of the struggle for liberal democracy within 19th and 20th century Europe.

For English history a new author who changed the face of the textbook from the mid-1950s, R.J. Unstead, was equally explicit about the citizenship role of his textbooks within a Whig Interpretation of History framework:

In the five books of this series I have tried to describe simply the chief events and personalities in Britain's history so that they will interest the reader and help him to understand how and why certain happenings have taken place. Also, at a time when it is fashionable in some quarters to belittle Britain's achievements in the past, I have tried to show that whereas Britain has acted foolishly or badly, her history shows **the persistence of ideals which good men** have lived by since Alfred's day.

In this story of a thousand years it is **the character of a people** that comes through; I hope that the readers will recognise this character and be glad (Unstead, *A History of Britain*, 1962) [our emphases in **bold**].

However, the field had significantly changed for the next generation of history textbooks that appeared from the mid-1970s. These books reflected the history education establishment's derision and scorn for the textbooks of Richards' and Unstead's generation (Lang, 1990). Behind the attack on Unstead and other textbook authors (Levine, 1981) was a perceived mismatch between the form, nature and purpose of their books and advocates of a 'new' approach to history teaching: the 'New History'. Here the aim was for pupils actively to construct their own understanding of the past as proto-historians, as opposed to being the passive assimilators of a cultural message and orthodoxy transmitted through the pages of the textbook. The 'new' history of the early 1970s has become synonymous with the Schools Council History Project with its emphasis upon historical sources, the skills, processes and protocols to work upon them and an understanding of the concepts that define history as a discipline and give it a cutting, intellectual edge in the classroom.

The 'new' history movement spawned a whole generation of textbooks demonstrably different from their predecessors. As new textbook authors we grounded our writing in an understanding of history's syntactic processes (procedural knowledge) from our perspectives as academic historians and upon an appreciation of the multiplicity of history genres that permeate our culture. As such we mirrored the interests and concerns of the Schools Council History Project. But we had developed our ideas within the context of a general debate about the nature and purpose of history teaching, a debate that involved a host of kindred spirits. Two factors became paramount: children investigating the past as young historians and their use of multiple genres to communicate their understanding:

I chose the sources in it [the book] because they were the ones that I found the most useful to teach with and I have given them to you in as complete a form as I can. The book helps you to decode their meaning - you are asked to be a real history detective!

In life we come across history in thousands of forms, such as advertisements, comic strips, cartoons, adventure stories, films, videos, documentaries, radio reports, paintings, sculptures, encyclopedias and guidebooks. We can do our history from all these and many other viewpoints (Nichol, 1993).

The tenor

The tenor is central to the creation of commercially produced textbooks, resulting in the authorial voice or register. The authorial voice is based on the publisher's estimate of the school market. In turn this links to the *author's* explicit understanding of the intended *pupil audience* as seen through the eyes of the teacher – the publisher's first port of call and holder of the purse strings. Richards' and Unstead's generation of teachers viewed the pupil as the assimilator of historical knowledge within the context of an understood and accepted historical dimension to national identity:

The child's knowledge of the syllabus is closely connected with that essential factor in the learning of history, knowledge of time order and continuity of events. A large number of schools advocate the use of **time charts** and a short **list of important dates** to be memorised each term... Other schools stress the importance of **revision**. Many teachers have pointed out the importance of a well-kept **notebook** (Dymond, 1929, p. 27).

While Richards and Unstead had a clear, common purpose in terms of content [the field] they were significantly different in terms of the authorial voice or tenor. R.J. Unstead's books employed a distinctly different tenor from those of Richards and his generation of authors, *Unstead talked directly to the pupils* in a friendly and concerned way:

This book is about the life of ordinary people in the Middle Ages. It tells you how they built and furnished their homes, how they lived, worked and enjoyed themselves; you will read about their clothes, food, games and punishments (Unstead, 1953).

Unstead's authorial intentions led him to tell stories to an audience of children, to provide a clear narrative and to paint pictures in words that would link to the pictures on the page:

In the village, besides the stone manor-house, there were the church and the cross, the priest's house and twenty or thirty huts for the villains. These were made of wattle and daub (wicker and mud) with thatched roofs. The smoky little huts had a fire in the middle of their one room (Unstead, 1953, p.22).

Unstead had a 'mental model' of his intended pupil audience – for them he created each scene using simple words and syntax and, where technical terms are introduced, synonyms the pupil would know. He used concrete examples and adjectives to bring the scene to life; for example, '*smoky little huts had a fire in the middle of their one room*'.

Unstead's tenor was also distinctive in dealing with factual content. He knew lists of dates, names and battles were a recipe for boredom. So, he kept names and dates to the minimum and provided a balanced, thoughtful and engaging teaching-text:

You will not find much about kings, queens and battles in this book, but to help you know who were the rulers, and what were the chief events in the Middle Ages, there are three very short chapters called 'Happenings' (Unstead, 1953, Introduction).

His 'Happening' on the post-1066 period opens:

William I was the first Norman king. He was strong and wise, and he made the barons obey him. He could be cruel, and when the Saxons in the north rebelled he punished them with fire and death, but when people obeyed him, William treated them fairly (Unstead, 1953, p. 26).

The textbooks of Richards, Unstead and their contemporaries were tools in a more general pattern of teaching with a clear view of the pupil audience and a desire to *'give the children a living interest in the past'* (Dymond, 1929, p. 28). A 1952 handbook for history teachers suggested that variety was the keynote to successfully engaging the interest of the pupils – the teacher should draw upon a range of techniques and approaches, *'a constant readiness to use different methods in different circumstances'* and *'We would not stifle that briskly experimental approach to the teaching of history without which our craft would ossify.'* (IAAM, 1952, p. 60). Variety, however, related to the dominant oral teaching method, in which the teacher controlled the classroom discourse in the transmission of historical knowledge.

The problem with the oral method from 1902 to the early 1970s was that it produced a classroom environment in which mastery of a body of knowledge predominated and in which pupils were relegated to a passive role. A 1970 survey revealed that history as a subject was overwhelmingly unpopular. Pupils, when not listening to the teacher's monologue, were usually engaged either in reading a textbook or in writing of an overwhelmingly transactional nature. J.K. Rowling gives an insight into what this mode of teaching meant:

Easily the most boring lesson was History of Magic, which was the only class taught by a ghost. Professor Binns had been very old indeed when he had fallen asleep in front of the staff-room fire and got up next morning to teach, leaving his body behind him. Binns droned on and on while they scribbled down names and dates and got Emeric the Evil and Uric the Oddball mixed up (Rowling, 1997, p. 99).

The 'New History' textbooks that we and others wrote from the mid-1970s had a different view of pupils as learners from that of Richards and Unstead. We believed that the pupil audience could *engage* with and *solve* historical problems - as opposed to the teacher telling them the answers. We believed (and believe) that:

- Children have the ability to engage in historical thinking with the support of their teachers as and when needed.
- Historical thinking draws upon a whole range of mental faculties: the sympathetic, the empathetic, the imaginative as well as the logical and deductive. History is a creative art!
- History is a literary subject: it involves reading and making sense of a whole range of sources, written, visual, aural and tactile. Children can read historical sources with teacher support.
- Historical enquiries need resolution and the communication of findings to an audience. Communication can be through written, aural, visual, enactive and electronic media.
- Pupils can work co-operatively, in pairs or groups, in solving historical problems.
- History should relate to children's lives: the worlds that they live in; hence link each topic to a current context, both concretely and conceptually.
- Pupils can engage in complex and sophisticated historical activities if they are broken down into discrete, connected steps that are clear to each pupil.

With this view of the audience, the teaching-text had to be a blend of narrative, instruction, sources of all kinds and tasks that would support the pupil in making his or her own sense of the past. The opening pages of *Expansion, Trade and Industry* (Nichol, 1993) neatly bridged the gap between old and new textbooks, grounded in a different view of both history and pupils:

Think of the last time you walked down the main street of your local town, city or suburb. If you had done the same walk 100 and 250 years ago, what might you have heard, seen and smelled? How and why did things change: for example, why do some streets and pubs have African and Asian names? (p.2).

Already the teaching-text is engaging pupils directly in a first-person conversation. I then directly challenge the pupils:

To 'think history' you have to ask such questions and search for answers using your **sources**. History forces you to try and see what life was like in the past and how things have **changed**. I chose sources **A-D** to suggest key changes from 1750 to 1900. **A** is from a textbook I found for pupils of your age written in 1900 – the end date for this History Study Unit. It struck me as a very good source to work from, full of ideas about how the author wanted young people to view their world (Nichol, 1993, p. 2).

The section *Farming 1850-1900* embodies my view of how children can learn history. It uses as its source a GCSE history book. It provides the children with an activity to read, comprehend and then transform the information into a different medium: a Radio Report.

The activity breaks down into a protocol of twelve linked tasks, each leading to the activity's resolution:

- 1 Key questions
- 2 Quick skim reading of the text
- 3 List words and phrases that are unclear
- 4 Quick skim reading [2]
- 5 Note all facts and main points
- 6 Discussion of points with partner or as a class
- 7 Slow reading
- 8 List key words and sentences
- 9 Draw a star diagram / concept web
- 10 Create class star diagram
- 11 Research into the topic, using other books
- 12 Reporting – produce a thirty-second report for a radio news programme on farming from 1850 to 1870.

The mode

The final element in writing for children is the mode. Central to this is technology for the production of teaching-texts. From 1900 to the mid-1950s the predominant mode was the organization of the content into chapters of dense print. Textbooks could be varied with the introduction of illustrations, but the mode reflected the purpose of the text: the transmission of knowledge. For example:

Illustrations. These have been included partly with the idea of making pupils feel more 'friendly' towards their text-book, and partly with the idea of aiding the memory. The cartoons (all of which are contemporary with the events on which they comment) may help both to clarify an issue and to implant it more firmly in the reader's mind. The picture-charts are summaries of movements or causes of great importance, presented in this way to assist the memory of the many students best approached through their visual sense (Richards, 1938, p. vii).

From the early 1950s R.J. Unstead introduced a revolution in textbook design. His textbooks contained pictures and text in equal proportions. The pictures included illustrations from original manuscripts, photographs of historical remains, drawings and recreated historical scenes and situations. Unstead's textbooks combined an engaging text with visual representation, where words and pictures blended seamlessly in the narrative explanatory text (see figure 3).

In terms of mode the 'New History' textbooks of the 1970s were visually similar to those of R.J. Unstead. Where they differed radically was in the role of the sources in the text and the linked activities that shaped pupils' historical enquiry. By the 1990s the mode had become formalized. The teaching-text was organised in two-page openings, with a rough 50/50 split between a) text and b) activities and sources. Each activity was broken down into a series of steps from inception to conclusion – the communication of knowledge using a specific genre. The range of genres is clear from the *Transport Revolution* section of *Expansion, Trade and Industry* (Nichol, 1993, pp. 16-29).

Topic	Activity
<i>The Transport Revolution</i>	History of transport guide –Write a one-sheet guide in history for transport for tourists to show the main changes in transport from 1750 to 1900.
<i>Roads</i>	You can create and play a turnpike game using your local ordnance survey map
<i>Turnpike Builder</i>	Contract – you have to try and win a contract to build a turnpike road in 1770
<i>The Impact of Roads</i>	You have to prepare a talk for eight-year olds on the impact of turnpike roads
<i>The Canal Age</i>	You have to prepare two double page spreads for an information book on the history of canals
<i>The Impact of Canals</i>	A British Waterways history competition . It can be written, spoken, filmed, drawn, painted, audio-taped or videoed.
<i>Railways 1800-1830</i>	You have to design a set of postcards

Figure 3: sample page from textbook by R.J. Unstead



William defies the Pope

The Pope had blessed William's expedition and, in return, William intended to support the Church and to enrich it with grants of land. He was a religious man and his first step was to send for his friend Lanfranc, the Italian-born Abbot of Caen, and presently to make him Archbishop of Canterbury.

Lanfranc believed that the clergy should be organised and disciplined, that they should not marry, enjoy worldly pleasures, nor make money by taking several positions or offices. Lanfranc and the King reformed some of the slack Saxon monasteries, built

Lanfranc was a teacher before becoming archbishop.

new ones, appointed Norman abbots, and founded some schools. Magnificent new churches began to arise all over the country, in many of which English and Norman masons worked together, using fine Caen stone brought across from Normandy.

But while William supported Lanfranc and allowed the Church to have its own courts, he intended to be head of the English Church. He politely refused to do homage to the Pope for his new kingdom and would not allow him to appoint bishops. No-one, not even the Pope, could interfere with William's royal power.



An 11th-century picture of the Normans—tough fighters, military engineers, builders, lawyers, administrators. Quite a small group of Normans went to southern Italy and carved themselves a kingdom there.

5 History textbooks, 1992-2003

Textbook writing until the late 1980s operated in a relatively free milieu: this changed radically with the introduction of the National Curriculum, 1989-91. The problem was simple: an evolutionary situation was transformed into a revolutionary one. In developing new series of textbooks publishing houses and their authors were flying 'blind'. Navigation was according to the 'data' that the instruments - National Curriculum documentation and advice - produced. History textbooks of the 1990s preserved many features of those developed under the influence of the 'New History'. A textbook orthodoxy emerged that in turn came under attack.

It is not essential to have groups of sources on every double page feature in the book, or indeed to reduce almost all topics to two pages of coverage (Hake and Haydn, 1995, p. 21).

An indication of disillusionment with textbooks is the disappearance of textbook reviews from the pages of *Teaching History*, the national mouthpiece in Britain of the history teaching profession, in 1998 (*Teaching History*, 1998).

In our own work we have been writing for children in a freer, more fluid form since the early 1990s. The dominant influence was the late and lamented John Fines, with whom we worked closely (Fines and Nichol, 1997). The Nuffield Primary History Project (NPHP) enabled us to start with a clean sheet. Our classroom research and curriculum development work reflected the NPHP's principles:

1. *Challenge* – pupils should be challenged
2. *Questioning* – pupil and teacher questions are at the heart of the learning process
3. *Depth* – understanding can only arise from study in detail
4. *Economy* – only use the sources that are needed
5. *Authenticity* – use authentic sources when possible
6. *Accessibility* – the teacher has to make the past accessible to the pupil
7. *Communication* – at the end of the learning process the pupil should communicate his or her understanding to an audience.

In the spring term, 2003, we applied these ideas in our curriculum research and development work, teaching a Year 5/6 class about the Romans for two one and a half hour sessions a week for six weeks. The school's brief was to fully integrate the National Literacy Strategy requirements with the history component. As such, history would enable literacy to be contextualised, embedded in the rich linguistic discourse that history provides. We wanted full pupil engagement with a range of teaching-texts, texts that would lock into the world of the children, texts that would stimulate, entertain and educate. So, I decided to write my *Magic History of Roman Britain* as a core teaching-text. Kevin and Kitty would travel through time and space to be eye-witnesses of the events and circumstances that the children were studying. With the help of Kitty's magic cauldron and Kevin's disappearing umbrella they were spectators of the living spectacle of the past. *The Magic History of Roman Britain* reflected current academic scholarship (Salway, 1993, pp. 17-27). As such, the Magic History translated academic subject knowledge into teaching subject knowledge in a form accessible to children (see Fig. 4). The text was one of a range of complementary sources the pupils engaged with. For the lesson (described in Appendix 1) we also used an extract from the film *Gladiator* and a set of artist's

pictures of Roman military life. Here the **cultural milieu** was a major factor in defining **the field**, in relation to the worlds of the child, the media and academia.

The wish to map on to the interests, understanding and enthusiasms of the pupil audience determined the tenor; indeed, the echo of Harry Potter was part of a much wider literacy strategy involving the pupils. Here we need to distinguish between the internal quality of the teaching-text and the motivational factors that are external to it: the learning protocols that cognitively involve the pupils so as to deepen their learning. These we incorporate into the overall teaching strategy and the activities that it involves (see Appendix 1). As such, they are part of the conventions for learning, the lesson's mode. A *learning protocol* is the teacher-controlled sequence of demands upon pupils in an activity that forces them to think at each stage. The protocol is the key factor in what is known as assisted performance, i.e. the teacher guiding and supporting the pupils towards a learning goal that the teacher has set. In relation to the *Magic History of Britain* the protocols are presented in Appendix 1 - it gives a detailed account of what a single lesson involved (Nichol, 2003). The extract from the *Magic History of Roman Britain* is the introduction to a lesson that sees the children asking questions about Caesar's army and then travelling to spy upon a Roman army camp. Here the pupils had to investigate visual sources.

The learning protocols of the lesson were:

- Reading and discussion of the Magic History
- Problem solving: advice to the Atrebates tribe
- Pupil questions about Caesar's army: pupils working in pairs and pooling ideas
- Watching extracts from the film *Gladiator* in order to learn about Roman army tactics
- Pupils as spies investigating clues about the Roman army – moving from desk to desk, each with a different set of pictorial clues on it.

The mode of the *Magic History of Roman Britain* is a bog standard printed text – back to Denis Richards! But, in the lesson described we also had a rich array of visual sources for the pupils to spy upon – including the battle scene from *Gladiator*. Here we see our written teaching-text used as one element in a lesson that drove towards the teaching goal – an understanding of the nature of Roman warfare. Reassuringly, this reflects the IAAM (1952) handbook of advice for history teachers: treat the textbook as one element in a varied and stimulating teaching repertoire.

How does this approach to writing teaching-texts for children relate to McKeown and Beck's (1994) account of their attempt to create a text based upon research into

Figure 4: The Magic History of Roman Britain: The Roman Army - Spy!

The Council of War Emma, Dylan, Kitty and Kevin hid under their disappearing gown. Caradoc, king of the Atrebates, did not know that they were there. Caradoc had called his chiefs to a war meeting, a council, in his hut. A merchant had just come back from Gaul on his Celtic trading boat with news that the Roman fleet was getting ready to sail for Cantium – the Celtic kingdom closest to Gaul. Caesar planned to conquer Britain, slaughter all those who fought him and make their wives and children slaves. What should the Atrebates tribe do?

➤ Flee?	➤ Send money and hostages to Caesar as a sign of friendship?
➤ Fight?	➤ Make a treaty with Caesar to attack the king of Cantium?
	➤ Find out more about Caesar's army?

Caradoc said that his son and daughter were on a visit to Caesar. The Atrebates chiefs argued long in to the night. At last Caradoc and his chiefs agreed that they needed to find out more about Caesar's plans. They would send a message of friendship to Caesar and at the same time ask Emma and Dylan to spy upon Caesar. Caradoc wanted them to find out as much as they could about how the Romans would fight.

The Roman Army at War Caradoc and his chiefs were all fast asleep, snoring like pigs. They had all drunk far too much mead and wine at the great feast that followed their meeting. The only things awake were Caradoc's two great Irish hunting dogs with their grey, matted hair and yellow fangs and the children under the invisibility cloak. The older dog, Finn, stopped scratching the fleas behind his ear, yawned and walked across to the invisibility cloak, sniffing at Kitty's toes. It was time to go! Kitty said that to find out about the Roman army they should first of all think about the questions that they would want answers to. Using magic, they would first of all travel to a battle that the Romans had fought against a Celtic tribe in Gaul. This would show a Roman army in action. After looking at the battle, they would go back to Caesar's camp as his army was getting ready to board its boats to sail for Cantium in Britain. Emma and Dylan were pleased with this plan – it would mean they could tell their dad, Caradoc, and his chiefs what they wanted to know about the Roman army and its plans. Finn's long pointed snout lifted the edge of the invisibility cloak, and his panting red tongue rasped Kitty's ankle. Her face froze in horror as she tapped the cauldron with her wand and muttered her spell, *Gallicabattlica*.

The Roman Army at war How could she do it, thought Kevin. How could Kitty have dropped them in the space between the two armies! On one side stood the Roman catapults and troops, on the other they could hear the trumpets and howling battle cries of the Gaols as they swarmed through the forest. Thank goodness the disappearing gown was also a shield that nothing could damage. Now Emma and Dylan would find out how the Romans fought. The Roman general roared the order to fire the catapults – the battle had begun. A giant Roman arrow bounced off the top of the invisibility cloak and soared towards the forest. The children could hear screaming, the roar of the burning forest, the wild neighing of horses and charging feet ...

Caesar's army Kitty's spell meant that Kevin, Emma and Dylan and only saw the start of the battle – for now they were back in Caesar's camp. The Roman troops were getting ready to sail across the channel. The children were able to spy on the Roman army – they could see everything: Caesar talking to his officers; soldiers training; soldiers dressed for battle; the camp, catapults, the army on the march; the boats that would carry the soldiers across the channel and pictures of fighting.

children's thinking and learning? Their analysis of research into the reading of textbooks suggested that successful features included:

1. enhanced background knowledge
2. developing engaging texts

3. inherently interesting
4. unexpectedness
5. personal relatedness
6. character identification
7. novelty
8. activity level
9. emotional interest
10. cognitive interest
11. focus on target information

Interestingly, these can be mapped on to my writing criteria (see Appendix 2).

Criterion	Magic History: The Roman Army – Spy!	
<i>Activity</i>	people	Caradoc, king of the Artrebatas Tribal council meeting A Celtic merchant Caesar Emma and Dylan – Celtic children Kitty & Kevin – the Magic History of Britain time travellers
	place	Celtic Britain, Celtic Kingdom – Cantium Gaul, Caesar’s camp, the battle scene – sounds
<i>Orality</i>	language	Description of the hut with the sleeping chief, Finn the dog
	dialogue	Kitty’s explanation, Kevin’s thoughts about being trapped between two fighting armies
<i>Connectivity</i>	the text	The children had returned by magic to Caradoc’s hut to be present at the Council of war The children as spies Trapped in the battle Children in Caesar’s camp

While the eleven factors McKeown and Beck identified stimulated interest they did not necessarily lead to improved learning. They analysed their findings and suggested three criteria for engaging pupils with teaching-text in a way that would improve learning:

- ACTIVITY** The engagement of historical agents in the events the text presents
- ORALITY** The use of conversational forms of language
- CONNECTIVITY** Making connections between the reader and the text, such as addressing the reader directly, drawing connections between events and the agents involved, providing an emotional response to and emphasising interrelationships among agents within a text.

The Roman Army – Spy! section of *The Magic History* maps perfectly onto these criteria.

The extent to which this approach to reading succeeds in interesting pupils and in developing and enriching their understanding needs researching: McKeown and Beck have shown that interest, enthusiasm and engagement do not necessarily translate into improved learning. However, it is reassuring to be able to map our most recent attempts to improve the quality of classroom teaching-texts onto their typology and find an almost perfect fit.

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APPENDIX 1 Account of the lesson: Roman Army – Spy!

The lesson was the third in a term's course on Invaders and Settlers for a class of 32 year 5 and 6 mixed age and gender pupils. The school is located in a small village on the edge of a small industrial town, with a kilometre of fields between it and the built-up area. Pupils are drawn from rural, village and urban homes.

We had introduced the course three weeks earlier with a mystery suitcase (link) and continued with an investigation into Celtic Britain, where the children had written travel brochures about Celtic Britain. When I arrived in class, the travel brochures were on display!

This week we would visit Caesar's camp before he invaded Britain in 55 BC. I wanted the children to get a clear and full picture of what the Roman army was like, before we worked on Caesar's short-lived invasions of 55 and 54 BC and the Claudian conquest of 43 AD. So we decided to move through time and space, using a magic cauldron and an invisibility cloak, to visit both Caesar's camp and a Roman battlefield. The battlefield was the one shown in the opening scenes of the film *Gladiator* – I only decided to use it when I learned that Peter Connolly was the historical consultant. Peter is a genius who has spent his life recreating in visual form what the Roman army was like, so I could be certain that it was an accurate reconstruction.

The key idea of the lesson was that the children would be spies, and that as spies they would report back to Caradoc on what a Roman army was like and how it would fight.

The lesson was fully in line with the National Literacy Strategy, even down to the detail of using film as a genre.

Year Group / class

Years 5 and 6: a class of 32 children, split evenly between the year groups. The children were benign: I had taught half of them the year before. Fred, the only potentially disruptive pupil, was involved, cheerful and co-operative throughout. All the children were adequate to good readers and writers.

The teaching was based on a previous scheme of work, including 'Celtic Britain: the land the Romans conquered'. We decided to take the existing Scheme of Work, and modify it in the light of changes during the past three years. We also looked closely at the QCA Scheme of Work, and were able to relate our planning to the pattern it suggested – indeed, it was almost identical. In terms of our own planning, our own SoW and QCA's fitted in perfectly with the school's brief.

The school asked us to focus on three linked elements:

- the substantive concepts of migration, invasion and settlement for the whole period from Romans to Normans – Celts, Romans, Anglo-Saxons, Vikings, and Normans – with a focus on the middle three.
- the integration of literacy within the context of history and related curriculum areas.
- the use of ICT to the full in a natural way, both in the context of exploratory and expressive learning, that is, as a tool for children to find out about the topic and to express what they had learned.

Teaching time

One hour forty minutes, split between a forty-minute and a one-hour lesson.

Learning objectives

- To develop an understanding of the nature of Roman warfare, and the problems that a Celtic king might face in fighting a Roman invasion force.
- To develop this understanding through using the resources for this lesson, the battle scene from the film *Gladiator*, and a pack of colour pictures.
- To develop the ability to extract and organize information from these sources, and to present it in the form of a written report.

Key question

What was the Roman army like, and how did it fight?

Resources

1 The Roman Army – Spy! (the story of Emma and Dylan)

2 and 3 The Roman Army: Spy sheets 1 and 2

4 Spy Report: Caesar's Army

5 Report genre frame

Video: the battle scene from the start of the film *Gladiator*

Nine pictures of contrasting aspects of Roman military life. These were laser-printed on A4 paper and laminated. Such pictures can be taken from topic books, monographs, postcards or downloaded from the internet.

Photographs of 'Roman soldiers' can be found at:
www.roman-empire.net/army/army.html

The teaching

The children were to act as spies both during the battle and on a visit to Caesar's camp.

Episode 1

Focus: Introducing the lesson – getting the children into the frame of mind to engage fully in the spying activity.

We started the lesson with a recap on what had happened last week. I told the children that Dylan and Emma were going to find out about the Roman army. To do this the class would need to read through *The Roman army – Spy!* first. They would read silently, and we would then discuss any ideas and problems.

This we did, with a lively discussion on the problem that the first paragraph raised – how Caradoc might deal with the issue of the Roman invasion. We talked about problems like this in the world today. The pupils supported the idea of sending hostages and bribing Caesar with money.

Then we moved into the main body of the lesson – the children's trip to both the Roman battlefield and Caesar's army. But first we needed to come up with the questions we would ask in order to find things out and make our report to Caradoc. I had sorted out a list of questions (given on the Roman Army *Spy sheet 2*) but also provided a blank sheet (*Spy sheet 1*) as the first page for the pupils' own questions.

Episode 2

Focus: Spy questions.

We asked the pupils in pairs to come up with questions. We then went around the class. A pupil contributed a question, and then asked a pupil on another table for his or her question. Ben was the most original, raising the issue of finding out about strategy, and giving a very clear and full account of what the word meant! The pupils' list read:

How many soldiers did they have?

What types of weapons did they have?

Where will the soldiers attack first?

How many weapons?

What did the soldiers wear?

What armour did the soldiers have?

Where are the soldiers fighting?

What strategy is planned?

What explosives did the soldiers have?

How did the soldiers camp?

Episode 3

Focus: The battle scene, Gladiator.

Now was the time to play *Gladiator* using the electronic whiteboard. Miracle of miracles – it worked brilliantly, just like being in a cinema. Lots and lots of fine detail. Vivid colour, sound, stupendous action. We stopped the video every minute or so to focus on the specific aspect of military life that it showed. The pupils were entranced, fully engaged in the film. The only dark spot was one pupil's comment that it was an age 15 film. We pointed out we were only showing an extract suitable for their age range, and took comfort when we discovered that two-thirds of them had already seen the film!

Episode 4

Focus: Researching the army.

We now wanted the pupils to add to their spy sheets, using information from the pictures. So, we split the class into nine groups of three or four pupils. Each group had three copies of a single picture. They had to use this to find answers to the questions (theirs and mine) on their Roman Army *Spy sheets*. They would move on the word '*Change!*' to the next set of picture clues.

This we did quickly and effectively – a technique we had introduced in the 'Mystery suitcase' lesson three weeks before. There was lots of on-task talk and involvement, working on the spy sheets. We only had time for four sets of clues before break.

Episode 5

Focus: Writing the report.

Break went on a long time as an assembly followed, in which it seemed that every child in the school received an orienteering certificate! But, back to work with 45 minutes to complete the lesson. We wanted to make sure that the report was as fully

and carefully structured as possible. I did not have a 'model' report to demonstrate and analyse – I assumed that they had already worked extensively on this particular genre.

We were conscious of the need to provide triggers for the field of the report – its content. (*The Spy Report: Caesar's Army* has trigger words and smart words to help in the writing.) The final section was designed to make the children think clearly about how to use their information.

We decided next to go through what was involved, so we worked out the structure of the report genre on the blackboard. This covered three elements:

- setting the scene
- details of what we would write about
- the advice we would give to Caradoc

In working out the report genre's framework, we stressed tenor throughout, identifying the authorial perspective, and how the writing would be directed towards a specific, clearly and fully defined audience. For details see the 'Report Genre Frame' which we worked out with the class.

A sense of audience: we discussed who the children were writing for, and the point of view from which they were writing. They all realised that they were writing for Caradoc, as his son Dylan or daughter Emma.

Episode 6

Focus: Writing.

The pupils then wrote their reports, using the *Spy report: Caesar's Army* sheet and the Report Genre Frame to guide them.

Learning outcomes

The children:

- gained a detailed understanding of the Roman army, its weapons and fighting methods
- were able to use and synthesise a range of sources to construct their understanding of a past situation
- developed skills in questioning and discussing evidence
- deepened their understanding of the report genre: they organised a plethora of information to write well-structured, vivid and accurate reports.

Reflection

This was a bubbling, enthusiastic and driving piece of teaching which culminated in the pupils' written reports. It was interesting using carefully structured supports for the pupils' literacy at each stage, engaging them in a whole range of modes of expression, with a stress upon questioning, discussion, reading of a text, exposition, engagement with a visual stimulus, and writing in both expressive and transactional modes.

THE ROMAN ARMY SPY SHEET	Name:	Date
????????????????????s	Answers	
What armour did Roman soldiers wear?		
What weapons did Roman soldiers have?		
What were the shields of Roman soldiers like?		
How did Roman soldiers fight?		
What did Roman army camps look like?		
What would you hear, smell, see and taste on a visit to a Roman army camp?	hear	
	smell	
	see	
	taste	
What words and phrases would you use to describe a Roman army on the march?		

THE ROMAN ARMY SPY SHEET	Name:	Date
????????????????????s	Answers	

THE REPORT GENRE FRAME – SPY REPORT: CAESAR'S ARMY

1. SET THE SCENE

- Place - Where
- Setting the scene
- When – date, day, time
- You are there
- Feelings

Audience Whom is the report going to? Caradoc the Celtic King
Authors Emma and Dylan

2. DETAILS

- armour
- weapons
- explosives
- camp
- campaign
- battle plan – tactics
- smells
- where marching to

3. ADVICE TO CELTIC KING - CONCLUSION

SPY REPORT: CAESAR'S ARMY

Name: Date:

To help you write your report, think about:

- trigger words: armour, boats, camp, catapults, cavalry, charge, fight, general, legions, march, officers, spears, swords, tunic
- smart words: then, another point, because, finally, first, I think, in conclusion, next, we saw
- *Look at your Roman army spy sheet: put the points in the order you will report on them*

carry on your report on a new sheet of paper

APPENDIX 2 Writing for children

Preparation

- Get the best academic textbook / monograph on the subject to acquire academic subject knowledge, both substantive (i.e. facts) and syntactic (the processes the academic uses to create the text).
- Think **creatively** about the activities and the detailed teaching and learning protocols of each activity that your teaching-text will support.
- Have a clear mental model of what your teaching-text might look like, and what activities it entails. Then:
- Think clearly about *what genre* is appropriate for the pupil presentation of the understanding that they developed from the teaching.
- Never, never ask a child **to write a newspaper report**. If so, resign your job immediately....

A checklist of criteria for writing for children

- Link the *teaching-text* to the *world of the children*, to their interests, motivations, what they *know, do and understand* – and what intrigues and excites them
- Write if possible *through the eyes of a child*.
- Provide a *stimulus* that generates enthusiasm.
- Write in a personal, direct and friendly way. Enter into a *conversation* with the reader.
- *Use different voices* in the teaching-text, looking at events through the eyes of those involved in the action where possible.
- Use the *active voice* throughout. Avoid passives like the plague. *Go through a text and turn all the passive voices into active ones*. It makes the writing clearer, sharper and more direct.
- Use nouns where possible – pronouns can confuse.
- Keep sentences *as short* as is sensible. So, go through the teaching-text and turn ANDs and WHICHes into fullstops – try it! Make sure that the next sentence runs on logically from the last.
- *Balance & rhythm*. Try to keep a balance and rhythm to the text.
- Listen *to the voice of the teaching-text in your mind*. What sense might it make to a child? What do they need to know / have access to understand it?
- Use *concrete, simple words*, both nouns and adjectives as *synonyms*, where you are introducing abstract or much longer technical words.
- Always *move from the concrete to the abstract*, from what the child knows and understands to what they don't know or understand.
- *Link* if possible the written word to *visual imagery*.
- *Chronology and sequence* – make sure that the teaching-text runs in strict chronological sequence of events – avoid running backwards and forwards in time.
- *Get a child to read your text before using it*. So that:

- *Editing* You MUST change anything that is not clear, never, never argue with the reader. The first-time reader is **always right** – you are always wrong!!

After teaching

- Record the children's reactions and revise accordingly.